

ANNUAL REPORT

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON REHABILITATION AND
EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2004

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Introduction.....	3
Vision & Goals of the Council.....	3
Vocational Rehabilitation Council Strategic Plan.....	3-6
Assessment of Performance of VR Programs.....	6
Council Action to Improve Performance.....	7
Council Action on Transition Issues.....	7-8
Council Action to Recruit Qualified Vocational Counselors	8
Other Council Concerns.....	9
Collaboration with Other Councils and Groups.....	9
Conclusion.....	9-10

INTRODUCTION

In the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Nevada is entrusted with the establishment of a State Rehabilitation Council (in Nevada called the Governor's Council on Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities), *working* both as a partner with and as an advisor to publicly funded vocational rehabilitation programs. In Nevada, vocational rehabilitation (VR) services are coordinated by the Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation (DETR), Rehabilitation Division. Within the Rehabilitation Division, VR services are provided by the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and by the Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired.

The Governor's Council on Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities (GCREPD) is to prepare and submit an annual report after the close of each federal fiscal year. This report addresses the status of state vocational rehabilitation programs operating within the state and will be available to the public through appropriate modes of communication including posting on the GCREPD Web page (<http://www.nvdetr.org/> Click on Rehabilitation Division, then on Governor's Council on Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities).

VISION AND GOALS OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The Governor's Council on Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities serves as a source of advisory and philosophical support for the primary service providers of employment-related disability services in Nevada. The Council has adopted broad work functions to implement its vision.

Chairman's Focus. Council Chair Karla McComb continued to focus the Council efforts on improving the Rehabilitation "Needs Assessment/Customer Service Survey" instrument. The goal is to provide more useful data clearly identifying program needs and system issues. Areas of primary concern are improving survey participation and establishing data on students with disabilities "transitioning" from school to work. The Council continues its interest in supporting the Rehabilitation Division's ongoing need for recruitment of qualified staff. The Council has determined, at the advice of the Chair, the reformation of the Transition Forum as a standing committee would continue to benefit the provision of services to youth.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES STRATEGIC PLAN

The table on the following two pages outlines the GCREPD's Strategic Plan, *as* based on federal regulations and is consistent with the Council's vision and functional goals.

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
STRATEGIC PLAN - Table 1**

FUNCTIONS	SCOPE OF WORK	STAFF ROLE	COUNCIL ROLE	TIMELINE
Review, analyze and advise the Division about its performance related to eligibility, services and employment outcomes.	Written and verbal performance reports on standards and performance indicators	Administrators prepares and Council liaison distributes	Review and discuss	Quarterly
Develop, agree to and review the establishment of goals and priorities in the State Plan.	Division & Council jointly discuss goals & priorities and develop initiatives in State Plan	Present Division's goals and priorities and prepare a written summary	Help to develop & initiate ideas to include in State Plan, and provide input	Annually
Evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation programs and submit reports of their progress.	Council reviews performance indicators as reported by Division	Updates Council with performance indicator reports in meeting packets	Review and discuss. Evaluate progress in Annual report	Ongoing
Advise Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Division regarding vocational rehabilitation activities.	Joint discussion with DETR, Division, Council	Updates Council at VRC meetings	Provide input to DETR on reported activities of the VR programs.	Ongoing
Review & analyze the effectiveness of and client satisfaction with: DETR functions; Nevada JobConnect sites; VR services provided; other public/private entities; employment & benefits outcomes.	Needs assessment-satisfaction surveys and reports	Contract with UNLV to conduct surveys and deliver periodic written and oral reports to the Council	Council Survey Sub-Committee to develop survey process and reports to Council for approval	Annually, to the extent feasible
Prepare & submit an annual report on the status of the vocational rehabilitation programs to Nevada Governor and to the Secretary of Education.	As stated in function	Prepares written report draft to final version	Provide guidance, comments, and approval of report	After end of each federal fiscal year

Strategic Plan –Table 1 Cont’ FUNCTIONS	SCOPE OF WORK	STAFF	COUNCIL	TIMELINE
Coordinate and establish working relationships with other Councils:	Written reports submitted and representation at meetings as appropriate	Advises Governor’s Council on Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities members of meetings	Coordination of activities through designated representatives	Ongoing
-State Independent Living Council and Centers for Independent Living	Same	Same	Same	Same
-Advisory panel for IDEA	Same	Same	Same	Same
-Developmental Disabilities Council	Same	Same	Same	Same
-Mental Health Planning Advisory Council	Same	Same	Same	Same
-State Workforce Investment Board	Same	Same	Same	Same
Perform such other functions as are consistent with VR regulations, comparable with other Council functions and determined to be appropriate.	As identified	Support for functions	Identify other functions	Ongoing

In the final four months of 2003, the Vocational Rehabilitation Council merged with the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and was renamed the Governor's Council on Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities. New bylaws were approved on October 3, 2003. In January 2004 the Council held an orientation regarding its role and association with the vocational rehabilitation programs. The merging of the two councils has brought a new emphasis on the need to have the business perspective in its decision-making by increasing the number of business professionals. Throughout the year, the Council followed the work functions with responsible parties and timelines as identified in the table above. This report gives attention to the agencies GCREPD *interacts with*: the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired.

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

Service Satisfaction. The Council worked toward improving the results of the previous satisfaction survey/needs assessment by changing the methodology of the survey instrument. By soliciting ideas for refinements to the survey in an open bid process the survey instrument was substantially revised. Survey processes for both pre- and post-service feedback were changed to facilitate the better collection of reliable and timely data.

To further assure the needs assessment/satisfaction survey results meet the Council's expectations to more clearly identify problems with service delivery, the Council created the Survey Committee to work with a contractor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This committee and the Council Chair interviewed possible vendors on new strategies to improve the need assessment/satisfaction survey. The Survey Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the 2003-2004 survey and made suggestions to enhance the survey processes and methodologies. Later they met to review bids for the 2004-2005 survey contract and made recommendations to the Council on the preferred vendor's proposal. The Council concurred with their recommendation.

The revised survey will provide the Council with a means for identifying issues from which they can recommend policy change to the Rehabilitation Division. The new survey was reformatted with the oversight of the Council Survey Committee to include:

- ✓ Survey of employers
- ✓ Instrument distribution/collection process changes: client pre- and post-assessment instruments
- ✓ Transition services survey

The 2003-2004 results were presented to the Council at the September 2004 meeting. The results highlighted the need to improve the survey delivery and collection process to raise the number of successful contacts to bring about a more reliable sample. The challenge will be to locate transition clients in a timely manner. The Survey Committee met twice to resolve the problem areas and select a survey process to provide more reliable information. Major points of the 2004 survey are as follows:

- Client service survey: The results demonstrated the following: caseloads remain high; processing time between client orientation and intake to the time of employment outcome is longer than most clients initially expected; and more counselors would be desirable.
- Customer Satisfaction: The majority of clients contacted were very happy with the services provided by BVR/BSBVI.

The Council will work with the Rehabilitation Division to review the survey results on strategies to reduce processing times for clients despite the continued high vacancy rates for counselors. The Council will work with the current contractor to further develop the needs assessment/satisfaction survey instruments to capture information useful in making recommendations. The transition survey and the employer survey developed by the Council will be conducted this fiscal year along with the revised client pre-service and post-service surveys. The Council will ask for quarterly progress reports during FY2005 to improve survey-monitoring activities.

COUNCIL ACTION TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

Performance Indicators. The Council asked the Division to create a database of transition student data including a breakdown by age. The Rehabilitation Division implemented a new automated case management system (RAISON) having the potential for developing real-time management reports that might include informational profiles on transition students and other demographic information in the future.

The Council reviewed the Division performance indicator reports at meetings and discussed ways to improve performance indicator outcomes. The Council asked for comparative data on Nevada's performance indicator statistics with other states. The comparisons revealed the Division's statistics are competitive to other states' vocational outcomes. This cooperative interaction promoted increased understanding of Nevada's goals and the challenges created by the state's rapid growth. The report showed the Division appearing to be making progress toward meeting the demands.

Transition Services. The Council in FFY 2004 reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to positively impact services for individuals with disabilities who are making the transition from the education system to the world of work. In collaborating with the Division, the Council allocated funds to purchase 15,000 each of Client Assistance Program brochures, BVR brochures and BSBVI brochures. This will ensure adequate informational supplies for school districts and transition programs statewide and will enhance information available to VR program participants.

The Council supported and monitored the Division's progress toward developing and negotiating signed intrastate interlocal contracts with all of Nevada's seventeen county school districts. The focus of the interlocal contracts is to better define the respective roles of the Division and the school district and to establish linkages to provide services to students.

The Council also reestablished the Transition Forum as a standing committee with seven Council members and five appointed representatives from various transition service providers including educators. This committee developed a statewide e-mail transition information newsletter, "The Funnel," designed to exchange information with special education staff, parents, students, counselors and interested support organizations. The Council continues to support the committee efforts to gather data through integrated systems to improve transition service outcomes.

The Council continues to urge implementation of the 2003 Transition Forum recommendations. In 2004, the Transition Forum and the Council were successful in having some of their recommendations included in a legislative report to the Legislative Subcommittee on Persons with Disabilities, for referral to Nevada's Governor and State Legislature. In Council discussions, the creation of an interagency committee to assist in the coordination of statewide transition services was suggested.

The Council voted in FFY2004 to develop and award a \$500.00 scholarship to a transition youth in pursuit of further education. The Council convened the Scholarship Subcommittee to develop an application process. The Council authorized the distribution of scholarship information and applications to the High School Special Education Coordinators statewide for their assistance in encouraging applicants. The scholarship was awarded_____.

In FFY 2003, the Council supported the Division's efforts to reclassify two management positions as counselors dedicated solely to transition students thus increasing the transition staff to four positions in the Southern Nevada area. These positions were filled in FFY 2004 and are positively impacting service delivery needs generated by the tremendous growth in transition youth in Southern Nevada.

The Division's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is the designated staff to the Council. In this capacity, ODEP has worked with local school districts, university and community college representatives and non-profit organizations on strategies to improve transition services. Through the creation of a Northern Nevada Transition Team of organizations and services supporting transition youth issues, ODEP participated in the development of a local *webmenu* to provide local transition and related resource information via Web site links to all of the support organizations and services in Northern Nevada. The University of Nevada-Reno Center for Excellence in Disabilities hosts the *webmenu* and coordinates the links. ODEP also developed additional transition information for the Division website.

COUNCIL ACTION TO RECRUIT QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL COUNSELORS

The Council continued to address the difficulty of recruiting qualified Rehabilitation Counselors and supports the Division's effort to reinstate an accredited rehabilitation program at UNLV. The Administrator of the Rehabilitation Division is currently engaged in ongoing discussions to establish the curriculum. The Council reviews the Division report on current vacancies and recruiting efforts quarterly.

OTHER COUNCIL CONCERNS

Medicaid Buy-In. Although not directly connected with the VR programs, there was much discussion regarding a state Medicaid Buy-In effort. The Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Advisory Group developed a program *allowing individuals with disabilities to enter or re-enter the workforce and purchase Medicaid coverage on a sliding scale basis*. The proposed program would also include a buy-in for employed individuals with disabilities. Council voted to support the Medicaid Buy-In. The 2003 State Legislature funded the Medicaid Buy-In effort. The Council continues to support the startup and implementation process of this program. An update of the program rollout was requested at the October 2004 meeting.

State Plan. As a part of its participation in the development of the federally mandated State Plan for VR services, members of the Council asked *for* the State Plan *to* reflect the division's commitment to developing revised and updated agreements with the local school districts and made suggestions to clarify the information.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Council coordinates activities with other councils within the State of Nevada. The Council has invited reports by the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, Workforce Investment Board, and State Department of Education-IDEA, Mental Health Advisory Council and, on occasion, Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Program Advisory Panel. During a discussion with the SILC representative at a meeting, the SILC survey was reformatted to include post-service information *focusing* on increased income for participants i.e. employment. The income information will be made available to the Division as appropriate. Due to concerns expressed by the Council, a report was requested from Nevada Department of Transportation about problems with providing adequate transportation for people with disabilities in rural areas.

The Council voted to support the "Kids on the Block" program through a donation of gift fund money to purchase a puppet used to educate children about individuals with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

This Governor's Council on Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities Annual Report gives attention to the ongoing performance of the Nevada Rehabilitation Division's vocational rehabilitation programs, namely the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired. Based on the statistical and qualitative data available for Council review, the programs generally appear to perform well, based on federal and state standards. This has occurred although the Rehabilitation Division has operated for most of the FFY 2004 year with numerous staff vacancies, including the VR programs Bureau Chief. There are areas of concern and areas identified as needing improvement (especially transition and recruitment), and there is progress as reported.

The Council herein submits this report to the Governor Kenny C. Guinn, to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to the Nevada Rehabilitation Division Administrator, and the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation Director. Also this report is sent to the State of Nevada's public archives for review and filing consistent with federal and state rules and procedures. Comments may be submitted to the GCREPD staff liaison, c/o Office of Disability Employment Policy, 505 E. King Street, Suite 502, Carson City, Nevada 89701.